

George Washington to Continental Army General Officers, October 5, 1775, Queries, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.

***To THE GENERAL OFFICERS**

Headquarters, Cambridge, October 5, 1775.

Sir: In a Letter from the Congress, dated 26th September, Information on the following points is required¹ :

What number of men are sufficient for a Winters Campaign?

Can the pay of the Privates be reduced and how much?

What Rations should be allowed the Men?

What Regulations are further necessary for the Government of the Forces?

To the above queries of the Congress, I have to add several of my own, which I also request your Opinion upon viz.:—

For how long a time ought the Men in the present Army (should we set about enlisting them) be Ingaged?

What method would you recommend, as most eligible to Cloath a new raised Army with a degree of Decency and regularity? Would you advise it to be done by the Continent? In

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that case would you lower the Men's Wages, and make no deduction for Cloathing, or let it stand, and make stoppages? and how much a month?

As there appears to be great irregularity in the manner of paying the Men, and much discontent has prevailed on that acct. in what manner, and at what fixed period would you advise it to be done under a new Establishment?

What sized Regiments would you recommend under this Establishment; that is, how many men to a Company? how many Companies to a Regiment; and how officered?

Is there any method by which the best of the present officers in this Army can be chosen, without impeding the Enlistment of the Men, by such choice, and preference. Under any compleat establishment, even if all the Privates in the Army were engaged again, many of the present Officers must be discharged, as there is an overproportion; of course we ought to retain the best.

Your close attention to the foregoing points against Monday Ten o'clock, at which time I shall expect to see you at this place, will much oblige, Sir, &c.

Washington submitted these queries, in writing, to the council of general officers on October 8. To the ration allowance query he added: "and for such small Articles as the Commissary at times cannot furnish, shall they be compensated in money or Provisions?" The council decided (October 8): First. Unanimously that the Army ought not to consist of less than 20,372 men, to be formed into 26 regiments (exclusive of riflemen and artillery); each regiment to consist of 728 men, officers included; each company to be officered with 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 1 ensign, and to contain 4 sergeants, 4 corporals, 2 drums or fifes, and 76 privates. This army was deemed sufficient for offensive and defensive measures. Second. That the pay can not be reduced at present, the present allowance of provisions should stand, and compensation in money should be allowed for such articles as the commissary could not furnish. Third. The men should be engaged to Dec. 1, 1776, but to be sooner discharged if necessary. Fourth. That each general officer should clothe a man according to his own fancy and judgment, and a selection to be made from these models, the clothing to be supplied by the Continent and paid for by stoppages of to per cent per month. Fifth. As to manner of paying the troops the council was equally divided; Washington, Greene, Sullivan, Heath, and Lee were in favor of monthly payments, and Gates, Spencer, Thomas, Putnam, and Ward of payments every three months. On the questions of regulating the forces and the selection of officers more time was requested. An additional query was laid before the meeting: "Whether it will be advisable to enlist any negroes in the new army? or whether there be a distinction between such as are slaves and those that are

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free? Agreed unanimously, to reject all slaves, and, by a great majority, to reject negroes altogether." The letter of Congress of the 26th and the original proceedings of the council are in the Washington Papers.